DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 278 994 CS 210 177

AUTHOR	Karolides, Nicholas J., Ed.
TITLE	Strategy and Focus: Teaching Literature.
INSTITUTION	Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English.
PUB DATE	Apr 83
NOTE	28p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
JOURNAL CIT	Wisconsin English Journal; v25 n3 Apr 1983
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescent Literature; Aesthetic Values; Book Reviews; Censorship; Childrens Literature; Elementary Secondary Education; *Fiction; Higher Education; *Literary Criticism; *Literary Devices; *Literature Appreciation; Nonfiction; Picture Books; Poetry; *Reader Response; Reader Text Relationship; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	Salinger (J D); Voltaire

ABSTRACT

The six articles in this focused journal issue are concerned with literature teaching on the secondary and college level. The titles and authors of the articles are as follows: (1) "Aesthetic Reading and Teaching: 'Candide' Revisited" (Michael G. Gauthier); (2) "Discovery: The Role of Subjective Response in Initiating the Literature Discussion" (Susan Casper); (3) "Inquiry" (Helen C. Lee); (4) "Acting in Salinger's 'Franny and Zooey'" (Jim Missey); (5) "They Are Not as Realistic as Some Would Have Us Believe" (Donald R. Gallo); and (6) "The Practical Book Report" (Randeane Tetu). Reviews of selected books for children, adolescents, and teachers are included. (NKA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ED278994

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Nicholas J. Karolides

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS 210 177

WISCONSIN ENGLISH JOURNAL

For English Teachers at All Levels

An Official Publication of

THE WISCONSIN COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Racine, Wisconsin 53404

Editor, Dr. Nicholas J. Karolides, University of Wisconsin-River Falls, WI 54022
Advertising Manager, Mary Heiser, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, WI 54701

Member: NCTE Information Exchange Agreement

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President	Mary Louise Tammi, Glen Hills Public Schools, Glendale
1st Vice President	Robert Skalfe, West Bend School District
2nd Vice President	Helen Heaton, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Secretary	Sandy Borman, Marshfield High School
Treasurer	Nancy C. Hoefs, Nicolet High School, Milwaukee
NCTE Liaison	Tim Hirsch, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Trust Officer	Jack Kean, University of Wisconsin-Madison

DISTRICT DIRECTORS:

Central: Pauline Merry Pray, Stevens Point; North: Patrick Folgert, Rhinelander; Northeast: Lillian Davitt, Green Bay; Northwest: Linda Plante, Hayward; South: Central: Shirley Williams, Oshkosh; Southeast: Janine Bina, West Bend; Southwest: Marilyn Vogelman, Evanston; West: Tim Hirsch, Eau Claire; West Central: Anita Janis, LaCrosse; Director-at-Large: Richard Hansen, Green Bay

COMMITTEES:

Auditing Committee: Wayne Kegel, Spooner; Committee on Censorship: John H. Kean, Madison; College and University Committee: William Lenehan, Madison; Creativity Awards Committee: Dorothy Koller, Appleton; Committee on Current Reading: to be appointed; Curriculum Committee: Mary Louise Tammi, Glendale; Membership Committee: Neil Vail, Racine; Wisconsin Committee of English Department Chairmen: Mark Heike; Wisconsin Committee on English Education: Wilma Clark, Eau Claire; WEA Section Meeting Program Coordinator: Robert Skalfe, West Bend.

EDITOR, *WCTE Newsletter:* Joe Papenfuss, Racine

WCTE MEMBERSHIP WCTE

The following options are available; all include the WISCONSIN ENGLISH JOURNAL:

Regular Membership	$ 8.50	Sustaining Membership	$15.00
Contributing Membership	10.00	Student Membership	3.00

Send applications and check to: Neil J. Vail
Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English
2220 Northwestern Avenue
Racine, WI 53404

Make checks payable to: Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Wisconsin English Journal

VOLUME XXV APRIL, 1983 NUMBER 3

Contents of This Issue

STRATEGY AND FOCUS: TEACHING LITERATURE

Aesthetic Reading and Teaching: Candide Revisited 2
Michael G. Gauthier, Swansea, Massachusetts

Discovery: The Role of Subjective Response in Initiating the Literature Discussion 7
Susan Casper, Port Edwards High School

Inquiry 10
Helen C. Lee, Indiana University-Purdue University

Acting in Salinger's *Franny and Zooey* 16
Jim Missey, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

They Are Not as Realistic as Some Would Have Us Believe 19
Donald R. Gallo, Central Connecticut State College

The Practical Book Report 22
Randeane Tetu, Middlesex Community College, Haddam, Connecticut

Books for Children and Adolescents; for Teachers 23
Mary Jett-Simpson, Nicholas J. Karolides

© Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English, 1983

The **Wisconsin English Journal** is published three times annually in October, January, and April by the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English, 2220 Northwestern Avenue, Racine, WI 53404. Subscription rate is $5.00 per year for individuals not members of the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English, $5.00 per year for public and private libraries, curriculum centers and similar professional offices. In matters of question, the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English reserves the right to determine which subscription rate applies. Single copy $1.75. Postage is prepaid on all subscriptions mailed within the United States and territories and possessions, and all other countries in the same scale of postage rates. Remittances should be made payable to the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English by check, money order, or bank draft. All business communications regarding advertising, subscriptions and orders as well as all manuscripts and correspondence referring to the editorial content of the **Wisconsin English Journal** should be addressed to Dr. Nicholas J. Karolides, University of Wisconsin-River Falls 54022.

AESTHETIC READING AND TEACHING: CANDIDE REVISITED

MICHAEL G. GAUTHIER
Swansea, Massachusetts

One of the legacies of the New Critical approaches which dominated literary criticism in the sixties has been the polarization of English teachers into two camps: those who devote themselves exclusively to close analyses of the formal features of literary works, and those whose sole concern is literary themes. Literature is often regarded either as verbal artifice or socio-philosophic treatise, resulting in the emergence of a schizoid pedagogy whereby literature teachers entrench themselves in one or the other enclave. Where the thematic teacher might be prompted to respond to a literary treatment of war, for example, by offering homilies on war's atrocities, the formalist parses the verbal structures divorced from authorial intention. Defenders of the New Critical inheritance charge that the thematic approach allows teachers to ride their ideological bandwagons over the old high road of textual exegesis. Literary themes teachers indict the formalists as Yeatsian "bald heads" who "edit and annotate the lines/ That young men, tossing on their beds,/ Rhymed out in love's despair." Perhaps a reasonable rapprochement between those who celebrate alexandrines and those who lament love's despair lies in a pedagogy which demonstrates the relationships of style to theme and to the reading process. Students need to see that good literature is neither embellished sociology nor linguistic legerdemain, but rather a controlled and crafted embodiment of theme in style.

By focusing on how stylistic correlatives reflect and objectify theme, teachers can direct students' attention toward the act of reading itself. Classroom interest centers on the elements of style as vehicles for the readers' participation in theme. This method, then, embraces aspects of both the formalist and thematic approaches. The formalist and thematic orientations, however, draw attention away from the literature at hand. The former concerns itself with initiating readers into a critical metalanguage, while the latter relegates literature to the social sciences. What I am proposing is an approach that yokes together elements of theme, style, and reader response, and thereby brings students closer to the literary work. The important point here is not that students "master" a particular literary work, but that the approach to literature occasion what Louise Rosenblatt terms "an aesthetic reading." In aesthetic reading, Rosenblatt suggests, "the reader's primary concern is with what happens *during* the actual reading event . . . the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text."[1] To borrow and perhaps belabor Rosenblatt's terminology, an aesthetic pedagogy, then, would attend to the reader's experience of theme as manipulated by style. This is simply another way of saying that the literature teachers' concern should be the development of reading strategies. In fact, the literature program might well be regarded as an extension of the elementary reading curriculum. If our function as English teachers involves training readers rather than promoting the disciplines of sociology or literary criticism, then an aesthetic approach seems in order.

An aesthetic approach has a number of advantages. Literature teachers have long been regarded as having no real skills to bequeath, because

literature itself is viewed as a cognitively deficient discipline. This kind of assault has perhaps spawned the growth of literature teaching which borrows its frameworks of inquiry from other disciplines. Our own confusion about what we hope to accomplish through literature is betrayed by the diverse and elusive rationales we offer for literature teaching, most of which emerge from extraliterary studies. Defenses based on cultural heritage (history), ethical training (philosophy), self-identity (psychology), or social responsibility (sociology) fail to impress students and school committees alike. Even our colleagues in composition, fledgling empiricists, chide us for our inconstancy. An aesthetic approach, however, holding the improvement of reading skills as its objective, plants literature firmly in the curriculum in an age of "basics education," for nothing is more central to education than capable readers. Moreover, the aesthetic orientation, in limiting the framework of inquiry to aspects of reading, does not prevent students from accruing the usual benefits attributed to literary study, but attempts to equip readers with the skills needed to acquire whatever adventitious benefits literature offers.

The aesthetic concern with the reading process is not a warrant for banishing the classics in favor of programmed exercises in word attack and context clues. In fact, a second advantage of this orientation is that it promotes the use of classics in the classroom. Where formalists might be drawn to texts which indulge in technical virtuosity at the expense of clarity, literary themes teachers might select a work for its doctrinaire treatment of a topical problem. An aesthetic approach invites literature in which style and theme meld into an artistic whole to provide readers an experience of perennial human situations. Such works comprise the literary canon. If literary artists pose and solve reading problems--one thinks of Donne's metaphysical conceits or Joyce's stream--then the use of classic literature best serves an approach which ministers to the reading process.

Another advantage to the aesthetic framework is that attention to the reading act compels consideration of the reader. At least since the Dartmouth Conference,[2] English educators have been increasingly sensitive to reader response. The thematic approach itself, with its emphasis on integrating literature to the students' "life experiences," represents an early attempt to redress the neglectful excesses of formalist pedagogy. More recently, interest in reader response has, in subjectivists' hands, degenerated into a blatant disregard for the text in favor of voyeuristic scrutiny of the personal psychological concerns of students.[3] An aesthetic treatment, however, encourages an examination of the text's structuring of readers' literary experience.

To put theory into practice, we might consider a novel such as Voltaire's *Candide*, an accessible, carefully constructed philosophical statement in which stylistic and thematic elements are conspicuously annealed. The following discussion of the novel does not pretend to thoroughness, but seeks instead to demonstrate some of the considerations appropriate to an aesthetic pedagogy. In fact, all of the observations about the intersections of style and reader response emerge from the insights of high school students who read *Candide* in a senior English class last spring.

A central theme of *Candide or Optimism*, contained in the title and easily expropriated, is Voltaire's indictment of the optimistic philosophy popularized in the eighteenth century. Students need not be overwhelmed with background material on Leibniz and the philosophical predicates of optimism, for a reading of this short novel acquaints them with the central tenets of optimism. The narrative consists of a string of darkly humorous calamities to which Pangloss, Candide's tutor and Voltaire's caricatured optimist, responds with mechanical aplomb. Regardless of the horror that

befalls the ingenue Candide and his beleaguered companions--disease, wars, earthquakes, rapes, mutilations, cannibalism, torture, conscription, imprisonments--Pangloss maintains, with formulaic consistency, the optimistic dictum that "there cannot possibly be an effect without a cause . . . in this best of all possible worlds"[4] (p. 2). Relying on an ironic incongruity between episode and rhetoric, Voltaire's style reflects his theme of the incongruity and inadequacy of optimism's gloss on reality, and influences the reader to an acceptance of theme.

Voltaire's adoption of a detached point of view contributes to his ironical tone and at the same time encourages the readers' participation in optimistic aloofness. With all the seeming detachment of Joyce's artist who remains "above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails," Voltaire narrates the events of the novel declaratively, dispassionately, apportioning no more rhetorical weight to shocking episodes than to casual descriptions of setting. No fervid passages displace the mood of unruffled acceptance Voltaire establishes. The mood of acceptance coupled to the detached point of view forms an appropriate vehicle for *Candide*, since the complaint Voltaire stylistically lodges against optimism is precisely the remote equanimity with which optimists greet all events. By reflecting this theme in his style, Voltaire invites readers to adopt optimism's cavalier indifference, for the text provides no moorings for the momentary feelings of revulsion or shock inspired by graphic images of depravity. But Voltaire's own detachment from the narrative is only partial. Just as Milton tempts readers of *Paradise Lost* to share in Satan's sin, but ultimately pulls them back to the right road, so too Voltaire counterbalances the mood of optimistic acceptance with irony. Clearly Voltaire's thematic intention would not be served if readers were left to flounder in a sea of optimistic indifference.

The enormous incongruities between the brutal episodes Voltaire narrates and optimism's cheerful critiques on human misery establish the author's, and eventually the readers', cynicism towards optimistic doctrines. Wandering amid the ruins of the Lisbon earthquake in which "thirty thousand inhabitants of every age and either sex were crushed," Pangloss explains to Candide the necessity of the catastrophe: "all this is for the best, since if there is a volcano at Lisbon, it cannot be somewhere else, since it is unthinkable that things should not be where they are, since everything is well" (p. 11). By framing chance, chaotic events in an ersatz language of design and logic, Voltaire ironically undercuts optimism's simple faith in a systematic universe and, possibly, surprises readers into an awareness of their own tentative participation in optimistic indifference.

Voltaire's strategy of stretching the reader between acceptance and irony characterizes his method throughout the novel. He offsets grim barbarity with ludicrous scatology. These reversals confound reader response, preserving a tension between shock or revulsion, detached acceptance, and comic irony. For example, describing the harrowing ordeal she's suffered, the old woman Candide meets concludes her story with mention of how she was forced to provide a starving army with food by suffering the excision of a rump steak from her buttock. Or again, the old woman describes how she untangled herself from a "vast heap of bleeding bodies" when she heard a eunuch, "rather attractive, who was groaning and saying under his breath: *O che sciagura d'essere senze coglioni!*'" ("Oh, what a misfortune to have no testicles!") (p. 22). Even Pangloss' metaphysical speculations are scatologically undercut by the philosopher's predilection for giving lessons in "experimental physics" to an "obedient brunette" in the underbrush. Such burlesque reversals dissipate an episode's pitch and moment, creating the conditions for comedy.

Voltaire's fondness for minor as well as major reversals emerges in even the most prosaic passages. On the novel's opening page, we are given a simple description of the Baron's castle:

> The Baron was one of the most mighty lords of Westphalia, for his castle had a door and windows. His great hall was even hung with a tapestry. The dogs of his courtyard made up a hunting pack on occasion, with the stableboys as huntsmen; the village priest was his grand almoner. They all called him "My Lord," and laughed at his stories. (p. 1)

The passage betrays minor reversals which deflate readers' expectations. Images of the Baron as mighty, great, grand, and lordly chafe against banal references to doors and windows, stableboys and the village priest. Voltaire's use of the qualifiers "even" and "on occasion" further contradicts with subtle irony the perception of the Baron's nobility. Voltaire's ironic reversals mirror the leveling tendency of optimism. The author contends that optimism homogenizes all human experience to a single consistency, so that no event surfaces above any other. All things are accorded equally impartial treatment in this best of all possible worlds. Voltaire's dialectic, then, whereby images and events as well as readers' expectations are reversed by contrary images and events, is an appropriate treatment of optimism's reductionism.

Initially, *Candide's* incongruities and reversals disorient readers perhaps unaccustomed to the kinds of fictional bifurcation irony demands. However, as readers travel the uneven terrain leading from acceptance of optimistic complacency to participation in comic irony, Voltaire provides sufficient landmarks to ensure readers' fidelity to his intended readings. Our discussion of a few of Voltaire's techniques suggests that when the convergence of theme and style is examined, the reading process itself becomes the locus of classroom interest. An aesthetic approach thus allows teachers to isolate and develop specific reading abilities, in this case the conventions of irony. In his well-known exegesis of Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," John Ciardi reminds us, as his title indicates, that how a poem means depends on a fusion of technique and subject matter. Ciardi's perspective directs students' attention toward what happens to them as readers, and teachers should be alert to this engagement of the student with the text. Instead of diverting students from the reading in favor of either historical and biographical "background considerations" or psychological or sociological speculation, teachers need to account for the students' experience of the text by showing how the author's style fosters specific patterns of reader participation. For example, in Canto V of his *Inferno,* Dante through a host of poetic devices deliberately makes the plight of Paolo and Francesca attractive, so that the reader is seduced into siding with the lovers, feeling that their punishment is undeserved. If Dante's themes include the allure of sin, the ease with which we consent to sin, and our *hubris* in questioning God's verdicts, then the poet allows the reader to experience these themes by stylistically providing the occasion for us to sympathize with sin before we realize our transgression.

One way for teachers to focus on the intersection of style and theme is to frame questions about the reading experience. To return for a moment to *Candide*, questions pertaining to, say, Voltaire's thematic concern with the problem of evil can only lead to metaphysical rumination. Similarly, to ask students to enter into the fray about whether or not *Candide* is in fact a novel is to sidestep what happens during the reading event. But questions such as "What effects does the old woman's story have on you?" which ask students to examine, book in hand, their responses to the reading serve a twofold purpose: they engage the reader's affect (in this case,

perhaps outrage with Voltaire's apparent callousness, or uneasiness with having been amused by the portrayal of unimaginable human misery) while at the same time turning attention toward Voltaire's fictional ploys. Such a pedagogy attends to a legitimate concern of the English classroom: teaching students how to read. Regardless of the particular aspects of reading considered, an aesthetic approach concentrates at once on the reader's response as well as the author's craft, thereby discouraging both an arid formalism which forsakes content and a banal thematic approach which reduces literature to adorned ideology.

NOTES

[1] Louise Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978).

[2] Although Louise Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration* (1938) advances the notion that the literary experience is a transaction between reader and text, interest in reader response was eclipsed by the emergence of New Critical approaches in the fifties and sixties. It took the Dartmouth Conference and the subsequent republication of *Literature as Exploration* (1968) to turn the profession's attention once again to the role of the reader.

[3] For a discussion of subjectivism's abandonment of the text, see my "Narcissus in the Classroom: The Pedagogical Implications of Subjectivism," *Journal of Education* 164 (Summer 1982).

[4] All quotations are from Voltaire, *Candide or Optimism*, trans. Robert Adams (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1966).

Discovery: The Role of Subjective Response
Continued from page 9

we have taught and read and discussed a work to the stage where we have no unanswered questions, it is time to choose something new to teach, for literature is and must be discovery.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bleich, David. *Readings and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism.* NCTE, 1980, p. 16.

Clifford, John. "Transactional Teaching and the Literary Experience." *English Journal.* Vol. 68, #9, Dec. 1979, pp. 36-39.

Daiches, David. *A Study of Literature for Readers and Critics.* New York: Norton, 1964, p. 3.

Fagen, E., D. Hassler, and M Szabo. "Evaluation of Question Strategies in Language Arts Instruction." *Research in the Teaching of English.* Vol. 15, #3, NCTE, 1981, pp. 267-274.

Ferrara, Charles. "The Joys of Leading a Discussion." *English Journal.* Vol. 70, #2, Feb. 1981, pp. 68-70.

Miller, Bruce. *Teaching the Art of Literature.* NCTE, 1980, pp. 63, 11.

DISCOVERY: THE ROLE OF SUBJECTIVE RESPONSE IN INITIATING THE LITERATURE DISCUSSION

SUSAN CASPER
Port Edwards High School

"Mom, let me tell you about this book."

"O.K." As I continued to read, my 11-year old daughter rattled on about the characters in THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE.

What does that remind you of, Mom, you know, the lion being tortured to save his frineds, and that awful evil witch, doesn't it sound like the story of Christ and the witch is like the devil, it's like the guy wrote the story talking about one thing, but really he was talking about something else, but he doesn't tell you he talks about something else, you have to figure it out, have you ever read anything like that?

"I guess so. I think that's what they call symbolism."

She ran off to the dictionary to look up symbolism, certain that she had discovered something rare and special.

Her enthusiasm and delight over her first experience with that particular literary technique grew out of the joy of discovering it for herself.

She had become involved in the literature because it was communicating in a way that isn't possible through any other medium. David Daiches (*A Study of Literature for Readers and Critics*, p. 3) says that literature:

> embodies a kind of knowledge which cannot be expressed in any other way; it does this while giving a kind of pleasure which is similarly unique, and this knowledge and this pleasure are of such a nature as to enrich the personality of him who receives it.

The beauty of literature as well as the pleasure of the aesthetic response that it evokes compels us to acknowledge it as art.

People naturally love the beautiful and must acknowledge that it fulfills a personal need if not always a practical one. It's why we grow flowers as well as vegetables. That which is beautiful moves us. And of all that is beautiful, literature in particular makes us "feel." It is one of the best ways that man has found throughout the ages to convey feelings and to do so in a pleasurable way. The experience of literature as well as the various stages of appreciation start with feelings and adventuring and proceeds to discovery.

Allowing students to "feel" and "adventure" and "discover" can be threatening to teachers. We enjoy displaying our knowledge and we are often pleased with our influence on student thought and the opportunities we have to instill our own hard-earned wisdom. Furthermore, few of us want to admit to students that we don't know all the answers ourselves. This insecurity destroys discovery.

So how do we help students discover? Traditionally our role in teaching literature has been that of questioner. From Plato to Bloom to Gull-

ford, we have charted, we have catalogued, we have complicated questions in an effort to find the best way to manipulate students toward a preconceived end: our interpretation of the "best" reading. Rarely do we think of discovery.

In order to discover, we must decide whether our technique in teaching literature is to focus on the text or to focus on the student. We might remind ourselves as John Clifford does (*English Journal*, p. 38) that:

> Most of us went to graduate school to understand more fully the literature that had moved us. Why then, do we forget that without that emotional basis we would probably not have felt the need to move beyond our early, unsophisticated encounters with literature.

It is reasonable then to begin with the subjective: that response which pertains to the thoughts or emotions. Questions like, "What in the reading do you remember most vividly? Why?" Students will need time to reflect and teachers should not feel uncomfortable about silence during a discussion. Current research indicates that long student pauses result in higher level response and thinking. (*Research in the Teaching of English*, pp. 267-274) This pause results in more student discussion and less talking by the teacher. An effective technique for using this time is to ask students to answer the question in their notebooks first. This facilitates discussion since all students have had time to reflect and most feel less threatened when they have a page of writing to rely on. Besides increasing confidence, this brief journal-write invariably increases contributions from slow students, as well as increasing inferencing and speculative thinking by all class members.

Besides asking students what in the reading they remember most vividly, the teacher might ask one of the following or any number of questions that the work evokes:

a. Does the mood of the reading "move" you? How?
b. Which character do you like most? Like least? Identify with? Why?
c. Did you have a physiological response to the reading? Did it make you feel cold, or grubby, or thirsty, etc.?
d. What did you like best in the reading? Like least?
e. As you read, did you recall a time when you felt embarrassed, or angry, happy or frightened?

The subjective question is also an effective motivational ploy. David Bleich (*Readings and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism*, p. 16) says that students are:

> intensely preoccupied with themselves and in spite of many appearances to the contrary, are instinctively looking for ways to make a subject part of themselves either as a solution to, or an escape from, their preoccupations.

Bleich proposes that since literature evokes emotions, those emotions are an appropriate place to start when interpreting literature. He suggests that students be allowed to relate the emotions they experience in the literature to experiences in their own lives that have evoked similar feelings. For example, if the response that the literature evokes is that of frustration, the student may want to spend time recalling a moment in his own life when he felt frustrated. A journal or notebook is a non-threatening, private place to do this.

When using the subjective approach or question, there is always the problem of dealing with difficult students. You know the ones: there's R. B. Sharp who's always first raising his hand, spends his weekends reading Sylvia Plath and Yeats and trying to grow a poetic-looking beard. Any response he makes is bound to be a critical, quasi-intellectual look at the text. Then, there's S.C. Simper who cracks her gum, chips off her nail polish in class and who you know will say, "I don't know why we had to read this. It's so-ooo wretched!" Ignore R.B. and S.C. Start the discussion with the average student, the shy student, or one of the other more neutral members of the class. Start out with a non-threatening question like, "Why do you think that some people leave home?" rather than "What is the reason that character X abandoned his parents?" And then listen. Sincerely. Charles Ferrara (*English Journal*, p. 68) says:

> If I am not really interested in hearing the other person's point of view then I might better give a lecture and not pretend at discussion. Without true ignorance, without real curiosity, the give and take of dialogue turns into an exchange of rehearsed monologues. Discussions can't be faked.

I remember an incident in my American Literature class this spring. We had just finished Faulkner's short story, "The Bear" and I said, "I don't think he names the boy, does he? I wonder why? Now, if I was writing a story, why might I choose not to give a character a name?" After a long moment of reflection, a hand went up. "Do you think maybe so the reader would identify with him?" Another hand, "Yeah, you know that change from childhood to adulthood in this story is a universal thing--this way the boy could be anybody, even a girl!" I told them I liked their particular insight; that I hadn't thought of that. They happily poured over the text looking for other things to comment on. In this kind of situation, the teacher is primarily the catalyst between the work of literature and the student and should as Bruce Miller (*Teaching the Art of Literature*, p. 63) states: "expose them to each other and then get quickly out of the way." Therefore, the best questions when initiating class discussion are not only subjective and non-threatening, but also those to which the teacher does not know the answer.

There are many ways to vary the early stages of discussion. Students can pair-off or meet in small groups and discuss their individual responses to the work. They can compare and contrast these responses before reporting back to the class. The teacher may ask the class if there are parts of the text that seem particularly significant and have students read those part to the class. Students can also explore different reactions to the reading by listing differences and similarities during a brainstorming session, then can return to the text to justify their responses.

It is during this stage that Miller says:

> The teacher must practice restraint. That time is the moment when the student begins independently, to appreciate, to perceive the work as it is, to make vital connections between the work and the self or the work and the rest of the world.

During this stage, students will naturally go from the subjective or amorphous question to the more factual or conceptual ones.

In initiating the discussion though, the best questions are still those to which the teacher doesn't know the answer. And those questions precipitate the most real, most alive, most interesting discussions. They are not strategies to manipulate students to think the way we think, but rather, to get them interested in the work as it touches them. And when

Continued on page 6

INQUIRY

HELEN C. LEE
Indiana University-Purdue University

The Aeronaut to His Lady *

I
Through
Blue
Sky
Fly
To
You.
Why?

Sweet
Love,
Feet
Move
So
Slow!

--Frank Sidgwick

"What's that?"

"What does it look like?"

"A poem?"

"What makes you think it's a poem?"

"It rhymes, I guess."

"What's a rhyme?"

"You know."

"Not really, not what you mean. Aren't there lots of different kinds?"

"Of rhyme?"

"Yes, different kinds of rhyme."

"I guess. I don't know."

"Where do the rhymes usually happen in poems?"

"At the ends of the lines."

"At the end of every line?"

* This "skeleton sonnet" is reprinted from *What Cheer: An Anthology of American and British Humorous and Witty Verse, Gathered, Sifted and Salted* edited by David McCord and published by Coward, McCann and Georghigan, Inc., 1945.

"No, sometimes they skip."

"What line rhymes with what line in this poem?"

"The first line, the fourth line, the fifth line and the eighth line."

"Then they all have the same last sound?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"$\overline{oo}$!"

"Right! Could we work out some symbol for all these lines?"

"How about 'one'?"

"Could we use a letter?"

"'a'! Let's call these lines 'a'."

"Fine! Are there other lines that rhyme?"

"Two, three, six and seven."

"What shall we call them?"

"'b'!"

"Then what symbol pattern or scheme could we make for the first eight lines of this poem?"

"abba abba"

"What other lines rhyme?"

"The ninth line and the eleventh."

"What could we call them?"

"c?"

"Are there others that rhyme?"

"Well, ten and twelve sound a little alike, but not just the same."

"Shall we say they almost rhyme?"

"Okay. Then we can call them 'd'.

"And the last two?"

"They rhyme. They could be 'e'.

"What kind of symbol scheme do we have then in these last six lines?"

"cdcdee."

"How many lines does that make?"

"Fourteen."

"Is there anything besides the rhymes that break the poem into two parts? Look at the punctuation."

"There's a question in the middle."

"How do we know which the question goes with, the top part or the bottom? Could we tell from the rhyme?"

"It fits the rhyme of the top half."

"After the word, 'Why?" what does the last half of the poem do?"

"It answer the question. The first part asks the question, and the last part answers."

"What picture do we get in the first eight lines?"

"Someone flying."

"And in the last six?"

"Someone walking."

"Are we always sure what the poet means? For instance, the word 'aeronaut' in the title means one who flies airships. Are we sure the poet really wants us to think the person in the poem is in an airplane?"

"Why not?"

"Could he mean anything else? Could the flying stand for not actually going through the air to someone but going to someone another way?"

"By thinking?"

"Would it be easier to be together in thought if two people were far apart - easier than going many miles?"

"Yes. But how do we know the poet meant that?"

"We don't. But is there anything in the lines that proves he could not have meant that?"

"No. Is that how you know what a poem means?"

"That's one way."

"Why doesn't a poet just say what he means straight out?"

"Like what?"

"Like sentences, like ordinary talk, without rhymes."

"Did you go to the game Saturday night?"

"Yes."

"Did you see the cheerleaders?"

"Sure."

"Did they dress like everyone else, or did they wear something special?"

"Something special."

"Why?"

"Because they wanted everyone to pay attention to what they were saying."

"Did they use rhymes?"

"Sure, lots."

"Why?"

"Same reason. And so you can remember the cheers."

"If you were a poet, would using rhyme and ways of dressing your ideas in special sizes and numbers of lines be a good way to get people to pay attention to your ideas?"

"Yes. But it's more than that."

"What do you mean?"

"The poem sounds nice."

"Sounds nice how?"

"It swings along."

"You mean it has rhythm?"

"Yes."

"What kind of feeling does that give you?"

"Fun - relaxed - good feelings."

"Does that feeling help you accept the poet's ideas more?"

"Sure."

"You found one rhyme that was not just right."

"Yes - 'move' and 'love'."

"Why do you suppose the poet did that?"

"He couldn't find a good rhyme?"

"Did he do all right with the other rhymes?"

"Yes."

"Then do you suppose he could have found a rhyme for these lines if he wanted to?"

"I suppose."

"Then why did he use this 'almost' rhyme? Where is it in the poem? In the first half or the last?"

"In the last."

"Did you ever hear anyone read a poem so that you just heard the rhymes and forgot the ideas?"

"Sure, lots of people do that."

"Then why would a poet who can make a perfect rhyme want to make an 'almost' rhyme sometimes?"

"Just to see if you are listening to his ideas and not his rhymes?"

"That's a good way to say it. Try writing what the poet said in ordinary sentences."

"Hmmmmmmmm. Okay, there."

"Did you use more words or fewer words than he did?"

"More, lots more."

"Would someone who read your words get the ideas we got from the poem?"

"No, I guess I'd have to write a lot more."

"That's something else a poet does, isn't it?"

"What?"

"Gives us a lot of ideas in a few words. And how about the meaning? Would everyone who reads the poem agree on just what the words mean?"

"I guess not. I wasn't sure I really agreed with what you said about flying. I think the poet means "fly' when he says 'fly.' Is that okay?"

"Sure. Do you think a poet might like for you to bring some of your ideas to the poem?"

"Maybe that's why the poet uses words that make you not exactly sure what he means."

"So you will add your ideas?"

"Yes."

"Look at the first eight lines. If you had never seen the last six, how would you answer, 'Why?'"

"Something about - 'because I like you'."

"But nothing about feet moving slowly?"

"No."

"Then the ending was unexpected?"

"Yes."

"Why would the poet do that?"

"It's another surprise - makes you pay attention."

"Is it logical, even though it is unexpected?"

"Sure - walking instead of flying."

"We've talked about a lot of ways to describe this poem. Remember some of them? Number of lines?"

"Fourteen."

"Rhyme scheme?"

"abba abba cdcdee"

"Divided?"

"Into two parts."

"How many lines in each?"

"Eight - six"

"What does the first part do?"

"Asks a question."

"The second?"

"Answers it."

"And what other things does this poem do?"

"Says a lot in a few words, says things you can take in more than one way, but gives you clues so that you know what the poet doesn't mean."

"There's a name for a writing plan like that."

"What is it?"

"It's called a sonnet."

Acting in Salinger's Franny and Zooey
Continued from page 18

ly'" before it "'moves from the lips and the head down to a center in the heart and becomes an automatic function in the person, right along with the heartbeat'"(p. 113) a form of acting, or am I overinterpreting the material? In any case, I think one might ask finally some questions that would relate the motif of acting to the book's meaning. What, for example, does Buddy mean when he says to Zooey, "*Act ... with all your might*"(p. 68), and what does Zooey mean when he tells Franny to "'Act for God ... be *God's* actress ...'"(p. 198)?

ACTING IN SALINGER'S FRANNY AND ZOOEY

JIM MISSEY
University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point

Towards the end of J. D. Salinger's novel, *Franny and Zooey*,[1] Zooey tells Franny, in language that closely parallels Buddy's advice to Zooey,[2] that the only thing she "'can do now, the only *religious* thing [she] can do, is *act*. Act for God ... be *God's* actress ...'" (p. 198). Though the sense in which Zooey intends the remark--that is, that Franny, in order to lose her self-centeredness, should give herself to something outside of herself, specifically, to a vocation of acting--may be salutary advice for Franny's sickness, there is a kind of acting which Franny must, and apparently does, dispose of in order to regain her mental health.[3] Throughout much of the book, in the "Franny" section and in most of the "Zooey" section, Franny behaves according to some image of herself rather than trying honestly to be herself. That is, she carries over into real life what she does on the stage: she tries to act a part. It is only when she stops acting in real life that the reader may believe a measure of health has returned to Franny. In what follows, I should like to examine, first, the claim that Franny puts on an act (shown in her relationship with Lane Coutell, her factitious religious quest, and her pretense at repentance) and, second, the evidence for the claim that she overcomes to a certain extent her proclivity for acting in real life.

Concerning Franny's acting in her relationship with Lane, the reader can see that she pretends to love him, but does not really do so. In her letter to Lane, which he reads as he waits for her in the train station, she has written, "Anyway I love you and want to get this off special delivery so you can get it in plenty of time if I can find a stamp in this madhouse" (p. 5). The sentence suggests that Franny may not love Lane. Later, after Franny has arrived and she and Lane are in a cab, she says, "'Oh, it's lovely to see you ... I've *missed* you'"(p. 10). But immediately she has said the words, she realizes "that she didn't mean them at all"(p. 10). The reader may conclude that Franny doesn't really love Lane or, in any case, that her feelings about him are confused.

Franny also puts on an act in the interest that she shows in the Jesus Prayer, for the reader learns that, while Franny wants to appear to be religious, she has really only amassed a considerable amount of knowledge about religion. After explaining to Lane how the Jesus Prayer is supposed to work, she tells him about similar notions in other religious experiences--in the Nembutsu sects of Buddhism, in "The Cloud of Unknowing," and in Hinduism. Franny seems to admit that her attachment to the Jesus Prayer, and its analogues in other religions, is a pose, when, in response to Lane's question as to whether she believes "'that stuff'" (p. 39), she answers: "'I didn't say I believed it or I didn't believe it .... I said it was fascinating'"(p. 39). (One might argue that Franny's answer is defensive and hence not indicative of what the case really is; still, supposing that she is really experiencing the meaning of the Jesus Prayer, one would not expect her to react defensively.) Further evidence that Franny is being false in her interest in the Jesus Prayer is given in the "Zooey" section of the novel when Franny admits that she wants something from the Jesus Prayer, which would make her "'just as acquisitive ... as somebody who wants a sable coat, or to be *famous*, or to be dripping with some kind of crazy prestige'"(p. 149).

Not only does Franny pretend to love Lane and to be religious, but she pretends to be sorry for the way she has behaved towards him. But her repentance is fake, as the strident and exaggerated way in which she represents it to Zooey makes clear:

> "Almost from the very second he met me at the station, I started picking and picking and picking at all his opinions and values and -- just everything. But everything. He'd written some perfectly harmless test-tubey paper on Flaubert that he was so proud of and wanted me to read, and it just sounded to me so strictly English Department and patronizing and campusy that all I did was --" (pp. 138-139)

A bit later Franny sounds the same shrill note:

> "I actually reached a point where I said to myself, right out loud, like a lunatic, If I hear just one more picky, cavilling, unconstructive word out of you, Franny Glass, you and I are finished -- but *finished*." (p. 144)

Zooey is aware that Franny's repentance is a pretense, for, in response to the first statement by Franny quoted above, he says, "'You told me that bit last night. I don't want any unfresh reminiscences this morning, buddy' ..."(p. 139).

Evidence for the claim that Franny to a certain extent disposes of her role-playing and regains her true self (the second major point of this essay) is given towards the end of the book. Franny shows, in what has been quoted and elsewhere in the novel, an important understanding of herself, but not until the very end, with Zooey's help,[5] does she experience the change she knows she must undergo. Zooey's first gambit to bring Franny out of her condition is to attack her: he accuses her, for example, of "'having a tenth-rate nervous breakdown'"(p. 166). His second approach, which finally is successful, is to show her that she is loved. Zooey shows Franny this during the course of a telephone call that, pretending to be Buddy, he puts through to her from the phone that is in Buddy's and Seymour's old room and still listed under Seymour's name. Franny eventually discovers that Zooey is the speaker at the other end, but more importantly, she discovers that at least some members of her family really care about her. She discovers this because Zooey tells her that, unknown to her, he and Buddy had driven up to watch her play Pegeen in *The Playboy of the Western World* one "god-awful hot night" the preceding summer and because Zooey feels she was good and "'held that goddam mess *up*'"(p. 197). Franny seems pleased that Buddy and Zooey had taken the trouble to see her and feels they care about her. Knowing that she is loved helps Franny dispose of her role-playing and regain her real self.

That Franny, at the very end of the book, attempts to be herself is also shown in what the reader is told about her. After Zooey tells Franny that he and Buddy had seen her perform in *The Playboy*, she says very little, preferring simply to relax. When she does speak, moreover, she does not use the exaggerated language that hitherto has characterized her speech. Furthermore, the narrator (Buddy) speaks about Franny in a way that suggests she has been at least partially restored to her true self: for example, though Franny "still appeared to have some considerable pain on one side of her face ... her expression was markedly uncomplaining" (p. 200). And later, after Zooey tells her that the Fat Lady is Christ, it is said that for "joy, apparently, it was all Franny could do to hold the phone, even with both hands"(p. 202).

A comparison between the last paragraphs of the two sections of the novel, both of which describe Franny lying on her back facing the ceiling, is helpful in establishing the claim that Franny finally achieves a

measure of psychological health. At the end of "Franny," the heroine apparently has something of a breakdown, and the last paragraph describes her saying the Jesus Prayer:

> Alone, Franny lay quite still, looking at the ceiling. Her lips began to move, forming soundless words, and they continued to move.(p. 44)

The last paragraph of "Zooey," however, suggests that Franny achieves a measure of genuine calm:

> Franny took in her breath slightly but continued to hold the phone to her ear. A dial tone, of course, followed the formal break in the connection. She appeared to find it extraordinarily beautiful to listen to, rather as if it were the best possible substitute for the primordial silence itself. But she seemed to know, too, when to stop listening to it, as if all of what little or much wisdom there is in the world were suddenly hers. When she had replaced the phone, she seemed to know just what to do next, too. She cleared away the smoking things, then drew back the cotton bedspread from the bed she had been sitting on, took off her slippers, and got into bed. For some minutes, before she fell into a deep, dreamless sleep, she just lay quiet, smiling at the ceiling.(p. 202)[6]

We may assume, then, that, at the end of the novel, Franny has to a certain extent become integrated with a truer self and that, though she may pursue a career as an actress, she has learned that she must renounce acting in real life.[7]

Teaching *Franny and Zooey* from the perspective that I have offered might begin with a discussion of the ways in which acting in the sense of posturing pervades the book. Concerning the scene between Franny and Lane in the restaurant, for example, one might ask students to identify the ways in which the two characters exaggerate, feign, or dissemble. (We are told that Lane "tried to empty his face of all expression ..."(p. 7) and that Franny "sentenced herself to listen to Lane's ensuing conversation with a special semblance of absorption"(p. 11). Moving on from a discussion of acting in the sense of dissembling, one might ask questions about the ways in which acting in a somewhat broader, but still largely negative, sense is developed in the book, particularly in "Zooey." Is there any acting, for example, in Buddy's letter? What is the significance of the statement that Zooey "looked directly into his own eyes, as though his eyes were neutral territory, a no man's land in a private war against narcissism he had been fighting since he was seven or eight years old"(p. 92)? Is Zooey's statement to Franny, moreover, "'We're freaks.... We're the Tatooed Lady, and we're never going to have a minute's peace, the rest of our lives, till everybody else is tatooed, too'"(p. 139), relevant to a discussion of the negative senses of acting in *Franny and Zooey*? Finally, what about Zooey's accusing Franny of "'having a tenth-rate nervous breakdown'"(p. 166)?

In a subsequent class period discussion of the sense in which acting is treated favorably in the book would be appropriate. The discussion might finally lead to questions about the book's meaning. Concerning acting in a positive sense, one might deal with some instances of hiding in the novel, which are used positively--the schoolgirl's hiding from the dachshund(pp. 151-52), for example, and Buddy's and Zooey's secretly attending the performance of *The Playboy of the Western World* in which Franny was acting(see p. 197). Perhaps Zooey's calling Franny and pretending to be Buddy might fit in here. A slightly complex instance of acting that is treated favorably is Zooey's explanation of the mechanics of the Jesus Prayer. Isn't the need to say "'the Jesus Prayer incessant-

Continued on page 15

THEY ARE NOT AS REALISTIC AS SOME WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE

DONALD R. GALLO
Central Connecticut State College

It's not shocking news anymore. Like the cancer patient conscious of the malignant cells gnawing continually at his vital organs, all of us who care about books and reading are uncomfortably aware of it by now. Attempts to censor books for teenagers and pre-teenagers are being reported across the country at an unprecedented rate. Among the reasons stated by parents and concerned citizens unpleasantness, sex, violence, and filthy language. In short--life depicted realistically in books for young adults.

Certainly it *seems* as if YA books are filled with every conceivable realistic topic in today's adolescent or adult world. But it's not true.

There is no doubt to even the casual observer that books for young adults are far more realistic than books for the same age group were fifty or even twenty years ago. There has been more attention paid to the growing sexuality of teenagers, more emphasis on the harsher aspects of school and family life, greater use of four-letter words. But authors of young adult literature, as a whole, have not overstepped the bounds of decency, nor can they collectively be condemned for being too realistic. There are numerous aspects of real life that have occurred only infrequently if at all in books for young adults published during the last decade, which leads me to conclude that YA books are not nearly as realistic as they might be or as filled with sordidness and other negative features as some critics would have us believe they are.

Take, for example, one of life's most significant events: the flowering of womanhood for young girls. Until Judy Blume published *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret*, the subject of menstruation was totally ignored in books for teens and pre-teens. Margaret menstruated to the great consternation of many parents, teachers, and librarians across the country, while millions of pre-teenage girls breathed easier because they finally knew they were not alone.

Margaret menstruated for the first time in 1970. Among the hundreds of YA books published since then, it's extremely difficult to find another girl who has her period during the course of the book. (Periods of course have been a concern of several teenagers in literature when they have been *missed* after irresponsible intercourse--e.g. in *Nia Alone* by Gunnel Beckman, in *My Darling, My Hamburger* by Paul Zindel, and more recently in *The People Therein* by Mildred Lee. But that's a different issue.)

It's not that menstruation *needs* to be an element in YA novels. But it's disconcerting for a reader concerned about realism in YA books to read something such as Marilyn Harris' *Runaway's Diary* and realize that although the physically mature teenage narrator, living on her own in unfamiliar cities and inhospitable forests, worries about food, soap, and toilet paper, she never mentions pads or tampons. In contrast, Harry Mazer, in his recent *The Island Keeper*, whose heroine is in a situation similar to Harris' runaway's, does include menstruation as one of the physical elements Cleo must cope with in the wilderness. Similarly, in *The Quartzsite Trip*, an

unusual novel for older teenagers, William Hogan presents a realistic and hilarious series of incidents surrounding a naive young woman's inadvertent first use of tampons during a wilderness camping trip in Arizona. While the attention to sexuality, physical needs, and other problems associated with growing up are unavoidable when 32 high school seniors go camping together, wilderness experiences are not the only occasions that may involve menstruation. No doubt, some librarians and teachers feel that Margaret's first-time experience with menstruation in literature was more than enough, but the measurable absence in YA books of that monthly event in almost every female's life seems somewhat unrealistic.

Masturbation--speaking of realistic experiences which are a part of the lives of many if not most teenagers--is another topic first broached in YA books by Judy Blume and subsequently uncovered in very few other YA novels. In *Deenie*, Blume showed Deenie finding comfort from her oppressively over-anxious mother by rubbing herself between her legs beneath the soapsuds in the bathtub. In Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*, much ado is made over the supposed snapshot which Archie alleges he has made of Emile Janza masturbating in the boys' room stall--the guilt that engenders, the fear of exposure that raises! Bravo for those scenes! But why so few others besides those? Is it realistic for most other YA novels to avoid experiences like that?

Elements of sexuality are often confined to bathrooms--places where everyone of us spends some part of each day. Yet bathroom functions are seldom mentioned in YA books. Not that every piece of YA literature needs a dab of scatological humor. But its absence is somewhat unrealistic. Who among us, for instance, at a crucial moment has ever found an empty spool in the toiletpaper holder and wanted to strangle whoever was last in the bathroom? Who among us has needed or wanted to use the bathroom, only to discover someone else occupying the single seat with the possessive determination of a war protestor chained to the White House fence? Almost no one in YA books ever has those problems. The description of a fictional teenager's typical morning usually goes something like this: "I climbed sleepily out of bed, washed my face, slipped into a sweatshirt and my Jordache jeans, gobbled down two pieces of cinnamon toast, and ran for the school bus." Doesn't any fictional teenager ever use the toilet before leaving home? (Maybe that explains why so many kids in school need the girls' or boys' room pass during their first period class!)

Speaking of bathrooms, did you notice that our fictitious student didn't brush his (or was it a her) teeth? Why don't parents in YA books scream at their kids to take better care of their teeth, like my mother did to me? Even after I had graduated from college but was living with my parents for the summer before starting my first teaching job, my mother still asked as I went out the door, "Did you brush your teeth?" More parents in YA books should bug their kids about dental hygiene. It's unnatural for them not to do so.

Perhaps mothers (fathers, too) in most YA novels are just not very realistic. In fact, the critics are right in complaining that the majority of adults in adolescent fiction are pretty nasty characters. Just to mention a few, there's Shelly's alcoholic mother in Gertrude Samuels' *Run, Shelly, Run!*, Laurie's abusive mother in Willo Davis Roberts' *Don't Hurt Laurie*, and Jane Rheardon's horrible father in Lois Duncan's *Daughters of Eve*. The YA field could use more positive parental figures like Butler Craig, the understanding, helpful step-father in Alice Childress' *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich* or like Marly's step-mother in *Marly the Kid* by Susan Beth Pfeffer. Sure, almost all kids hate their parents at one

time or another when they are growing up. But it's unrealistic to believe that parents in general are as nasty as they collectively seem to be in recent YA fiction.

The kinds of jobs those parents have are also often unrealistic. Taken individually that may not be so. But, when viewed collectively, a realistically unproportionate number of parents in YA novels hold better than average jobs. Especially mothers who work outside the home. Have you noticed that the majority of working mothers in YA books are either teachers, or lawyers, or in some form of social service such as nursing, social work, or psychiatry? In the real world millions of mothers are factory workers or secretaries. How many books can you recall where the mother does not hold a highly-regarded job? Ed Hall's mother, in Kin Platt's *The Ape Inside Me,* works at a supermarket, but she seems to be an exception. A little less of the high-class jobs and a little more of the ordinary ones would be more realistic . . . for fathers, too..

Other, less volatile, issues and topics are also apparently out of balance in YA books. One of those is extra-curricular activities. Sports, for girls as well as for boys, seems to be in enough evidence. But where are the kids from the school band or orchestra? Where are the artists--the painters, the potters, the weavers? Where are the students from the photography club, the chess club, the drama group, or the chorus? A drama group plays a significant role in Sandra Scoppettone's *Trying Hard To Hear You.* Natalie, the narrator's female friend in Ursula K. LeGuin's *Very Far Away from Anywhere Else,* is an accomplished performer on the violin, viola, and piano as well as a musical composer. Carrie, in Zibby Oneal's *The Language of Goldfish,* is a talented artist whose drawings help her trace her way out of mental illness. But those talented teenagers seem to be exceptions.

They are *very* talented exceptions, too. Where are the more ordinary kids--the average student in the school's marching band, or the kid who practices day after day on the piano or the clarinet or the drums, accomplishing little besides jangling the nerves of parents, siblings, and neighbors?

Ordinary teenagers, of course, are not in much evidence in most YA books. As much as I liked and admired the story and the intent of Norma Klein's *Mom, the Wolfman and Me,* the narrator for me was just too smart, too erudite, too perceptive for an eleven-year-old girl. It's not that Bret is an unrealistic character; I've taught kids her age that were as smart. But, again, those kinds of kids are exceptions. I suppose it's no different from adult fiction--ordinary isn't interesting, it doesn't sell. S.E. Hinton's narrator in *Rumblefish* is a more ordinary kid; so are the male narrators in *Gaucho* by Gloria Gonzalez and *The Ape Inside Me* by Kin Platt. But in a way, those boys are not totally representative either, since all three are from lower-class backgrounds. Must the ordinary kids in YA fiction be only from the lower-class, only from minority and poverty backgrounds? Seems a bit unrealistic.

Finally, in young adult literature, where are the social groups which play such an important part in the lives of so many real-life kids outside of school? Where are the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts in adolescent fiction? An innercity Boy Scout troop marches humorously through one of Piri Thomas' contributions to *Stories from El Barrio,* but that's about it. Since so many people have been Scouts at one time, there must be enough unwritten Boy Scout and Girl Scout adventure stories to fill dozens of YA novels, but nobody has bothered to work them into the plots of recent novels.

The same can be said of kids in CYO, B'nai B'rith Girls, Youth for Christ and other quasi-religious groups for teenagers. Youthful experiences in those kinds of organizations are conspicuously absent from most YA novels. Perhaps the religious element makes that a touchy thing to explore in a field designed for mass-marketing, but, once more, another aspect of real-life for many kids has been slighted.

Are contemporary YA novels realistic? Certainly--in some ways. But, as this brief exploration has shown, lots of possibilities still exist for authors to give greater attention to a number of issues and experiences which would make YA fiction even more reflective of real life than it has been.

THE PRACTICAL BOOK REPORT

RANDEANE TETU
Middlesex Community College, Haddam, Connecticut

In Advanced English, Miss Derrick came up with this list of activities she calls ALTERNATIVES TO BOOK REPORTS. So Dee wrote an essay titled *Save the Book Report* that went like this--

We are teaching something meaningful with book reports. We are teaching students to be devious and to polish up their deviosity by making it good enough to be accepted by the English teacher. This deviosity, begun early and practiced throughout the high school years, is fundamental for students enrolled in the College Course as it develops the expertise needed for throwing the bull on essay exams in all subjects. Of all the requirements listed, book reports are the single most effective and efficient preparation for college.

Although the professed reason for book reports is to get students to read books (and thereby expand their horizons), everyone knows that the ones who read books do reports on the books they've already read, and the ones who don't read books do reports on the books they haven't read. Those who read get the chance to practice essay writing on something they know (these are most likely the same ones who will read assignments in college); those who don't, get the chance to construct essays based on the little information available from the paperback cover or gleaned from someone who's read the book (these are most likely the ones who will not read assignments). In either case, with written book reports, students get practice and feedback in a basic survival skill--convincing someone else that they do know what they either do or do not actually know.

Because some of the students who do read books for book reports may not read all assignments in college, I suggest assigning book reports to be written on books the student has not read. This, I feel, would raise the state of the art to its most meaningful level.

--I think she could have convinced Miss Derrick, who felt the power of the written word, had she stopped right there, but she told Miss Derrick that she didn't know what to do about the student who would cheat and read the book. That canned it.

This article previously appeared in the Winter *Virginia English Journal*.

BOOKS
FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Crews, Donald. *Carousel*. New York: Greenwillow, 1982.

Donald Crews creates a visual experience in this non-verbal book that eases us into a carousel ride. We each carefully choose our painted mounts. As the carousel gradually builds speed, our figures blur into a spinning swirl of color. Our bodies can feel the whirling motion and our minds gallop into fantasies. The carousel slows and stops. We dismount and walk away - not quite the same as we came.

The book perfectly captures the motion and emotion of the carousel ride and would pair beautifully with poetry on the same subject.

Crews, Donald. *Harbor*. New York: Greenwillow, 1982.

Giving substance and detail to a reader's general fascination with boats and harbors is accomplished with simplicity in *Harbor*. Donald Crews carefully illustrates and labels various kinds of boats such as barges, tankers, ferryboats, and passenger liners doing their work. A summary page at the end of the book gives a few more details about each type of boat represented.

The book is excellent in stimulating discussion about boats and their work and thus extending children's concepts. Although the book is presented in a simple format, it should not be assumed that it is only for the young child. Middle grade children will enjoy interpreting and discussion of the book as well.

Mary Jett-Simpson, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Collier, James L. and Christopher Collier. *War Comes to Willy Freeman*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1983. (Ages 12 and up)

An exciting novel in its plot and theme, *War Comes to Willy Freeman* additionally offers an unusual perspective to the Revolutionary War. Set in Connecticut and New York City it introduces us to a former slave, Willy, freed by law because her father enlisted with permission from his owner to fight with the rebels. Her father is killed and her mother taken prisoner by the British, however, so Willy is on her own first to find her relatives--whose cruel owner attempts to re-ensnare her into slavery--and then her mother in New York City. The trials she faces include being captured by an assaulting force who hold her as a spy, escaping, searching for her mother in New York City while working at Sam Fraunces' inn. The climax is a dramatic court trial.

The historical background and its muted theme of freedom, that of blacks intertwined with that of the Colonists, is well supported by the personal development of the young heroine.

Nicholas J. Karolides, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

QUICK STUDY REVIEWS:

Haugaard, Erik C. *Leif the Unlucky*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1982. (Ages 11-14)

Setting: Greenland, ca. 1500. Greenlanders forgotten by their home government are increasingly tested by privations of weather and loneliness. While most of the adults have given up, a band of children attempt to develop survival tactics. Their leader, Leif, is challenged by another unscrupulous youth. An imaginative explanation of what might have happened to the "lost" settlements of Greenland.

Yolen, Jane. *The Gift of Sarah Barker.* New York: The Viking Press, 1981. Grades 5-8.

Setting: a Shaker community of New York in the mid-1800's. The rigid principles of hard work, cooperation, and separation of the sexes confront two young members who sense speechless friendship changing to love. They must make a wrenching choice. A compelling book.

Godden, Rumer. *The Dark Horse.* New York: The Viking Press, 1982. Grades 6-9.

Setting: Calcutta, some fifty years ago. Cast: a dark horse, magnificent but "ruined" thoroughbred; a Mother Superior with horse sense; several "outsiders." Interesting turns of plot involve these unlikely characters though the action moves, skirting disaster, toward the big race. A fast finish.

Paul, Raymond. *The Thomas Street Horror--A Historical Novel of Murder.* New York: The Viking Press, 1982. JHS.

Setting: New York City, 1836. Based on actual murder of a high-paid prostitute, an unsolved crime, this novel provides all the details and a solution. We're introduced to the case by a reporter; there are a number of interesting characters but the essential focus is the plot.

Fenton, Robert. *Refugee Summer.* New York: Delacourt Press, 1982. Grades 6-9.

Setting: A village in Greece, 1922. The Greco-Turkish War affects the lives of five youngsters, two of which are Americans. They invent a game which starts with adventure but gets caught up in reality. A close view of an unsettling time.

Yolen, Jane. *Dragon's Blood.* New York: Delacourt Press, 1982.

Setting: The planet Austar IV. A bonded youth seeks his release from the dragon barns and his future by stealing a new hatching, impressing it and training it. He is watched by a mysterious girl and his bonder, but he forges ahead. A dynamic rite of passage story, establishing well the life of this planet.

Nicholas J. Karolides, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

FOR TEACHERS

Larrick, Nancy. *A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading.* (5th Edition) New York: Bantam Books, 1982.

An important often neglected factor in promoting children's reading is the expanding of parents' knowledge and skills. Nancy Larrick touches all bases with this revised edition, helping parents to understand their role: language activities, reading aloud, helping the beginning reader, building interests, activities with older readers and more. He provides book selection sources and information on book clubs so home libraries can be stocked. And then there is the compact (70 pages) list of "Books They Like," and lists of magazines for children and sources for parents. Teachers need to help themselves by developing support from the home front: bring this book to parents' attention. You can read it yourself, too.

Nicholas J. Karolides, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

Kimmel, Margaret Mary. *For Reading Out Loud! A Guide to Sharing Books with Children.* New York: Delacorte Press, 1983.

Reading aloud to children is happily being re-established (though some teachers never gave it up) in the teaching methodology of language arts teachers. Why bother? The authors supply reasons ranging from the promotion of skills to reaching the disabled reader to assuring extended reading interest. They follow thus with discussion of when to fit it in and how to do it; the suggestions seem practical. Much of the rest of the book is bibliography: 140 recommended annotated read-aloud selections (grades K-8); then cross listings by subject and type and setting; poetry; readings for teachers. A very useful book indeed.

Nicholas J. Karolides, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 29 - Index: *Wisconsin English Journal*/Volumes 1-15. Compiled by Eugene Engeldinger and Barbara Stevens, UW-Eau Claire. $2.00 - member/member libraries; $3.00 - non-members.

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 30 - Bibliography of Science Fiction. April, 1974. Compiled by Roger D. Sween, UW-Platteville. A listing, briefly annotated, of almost 300 recommended novels, short stories, and anthologies, 43 best films from 1902-1972, and 28 secondary sources included. $1.00

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 31 - Censorship in Wisconsin Public High Schools, 1973. Lee A. Burress, UW-Stevens Point. A follow-up of his 1964 study; current censorship trends and developments related to Supreme Court decisions. 75¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 34 - Books Students Recommend to Their Friends. Compiled by Mary K. Feirn and Joyce S. Steward, UW-Madison for the Committee on Current Reading. $1.00

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 35 - An annotated Bibliography of Fantasy Literature. Compiled by Robert H. Boyer and Kenneth J. Zahorski, St. Norbert College, DePere, Wis. An annotated listing of fantasy primary works, reference tools, full-length critical works, essays, magazines, associations, dealers and publishers. Complements Sween's Bibliography of Science Fiction (Service Bulletin No. 30). $1.00

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 36 - Research: Composition Teaching Methods and Teaching Purposes. "Teaching Public Written Discourse: The Blending of Communicative Effectiveness and Mechanical Correctness" by Joanne Yatvin, Crestwood School, Madison; "Writing Competencies Needed by High School Graduates" by Robert A. McKeag, UW-Oshkosh. 75¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 37 - Wisconsin Authors: Literary Map and Bulletin. Compiled by Duane and Maureen Roen. The twenty-three by twenty-nine-inch map includes drawings of scenes from the lives or the books of thirty-seven major Wisconsin authors. The map also includes a list of 126 adult authors and 60 juvenile authors. The 41-page bulletin includes all of the information found on the map, as well as a wealth of biolgraphical and bibliographic material. Many titles listed are labeled as ones suitable for either elementary or secondary students. $3.00 plus $1.00 postage for map and bulletin ($1.00 for bulletin alone).

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 38 - Bibliography of Native American Books for Elementary Grades. April, 1979. Compiled by Maxine Burress, UW-Stevens Point. An annotated bibliography of books for children, grades K-8. Grade levels are indicated. 75¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 39 - Alcohol and Alcoholism in Children's Literature. Compiled by Carl Personke, UW-Madison. An annotated bibliography of books on alcohol, alcohol abuse and alcoholism. Evaluation of effectiveness is included. 60¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 40 - Index: *Wisconsin English Journal*/Volumes 16-20. Compiled by Barbara Stevens, UW-Eau Claire. See Service Bulletin No. 29. $1.00

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 41 - A Small Community Serves Its Gifted. April 1981. By Monica L. Josten, South Milwaukee, Wisconsin. A discussion of a program for gifted students including the method of selecting students, handling problems, curriculum and the results of the program's operation.

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 42 - Elementary Children's Writing--A Study and an Approach. Beverly Nordberg, Fox Point, 1982. Discussion of criteria for evaluating children's writing and their application. Teaching suggestions offered. 75¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 43 - Wisconsin Writers. Compiled by Robert Wells. An overview of current Wisconsin writers with a bibliography of their work. 75¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 44 - Evaluating Student Writing. February, 1982. Nancy S. Haugen, UW-Madison. Discussion of evaluation principles and tactics with specific time saving suggestions. 75¢

BEST COPY AVAILABLE